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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 001947

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CH](#) [HK](#)

SUBJECT: LSD MASTER PLAN FOR POLITICAL REFORM: ONE BANANA  
AT A TIME

REF: (A) HONG KONG 1931 (B) HONG KONG 1918

Classified By: Acting Consul General Christopher Marut for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Although their latest antics in the Legislative Council (LegCo) chamber are receiving tepid reviews even from their allies, the League of Social Democrats (LSD) insists their extremism will spur Beijing to negotiate with the more moderate pan-democrats on constitutional reform. LSD legislator Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung believes Beijing would actually like to see the Civic Party become the leaders of the pan-democratic movement, since they focus on Hong Kong and do not support democratic activists on the Mainland like many Democratic Party (DPHK) leaders do. Leung contends Beijing has a role in the current Kam Nai-wai sexual harassment scandal (ref B), and wants to signal to other pan-democrats that it holds files on their peccadilloes. Leung also alleges that the PRC and Next Media mogul and nominal Beijing arch-enemy Jimmy Lai Chee-ying are allies of convenience in Taiwan, by which Leung explains pro-democracy Apple Daily's lavish coverage of the Kam scandal. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Comment: For all his Che Guevara affectations and puerile behavior in and out of LegCo, one-on-one Leung is a thoughtful interlocutor with a broad political perspective. That does not necessarily make his judgments correct, and we assume he is "attempting to influence as well as inform" when speaking with us. In particular, Leung's comments about the other parties in the pan-democratic caucus should be caveated by his admission that he is not in regular contact with either the Civics (who detest the LSD) or the DPHK (who may not like his LegCo antics, but whose senior members have shared the barricades with him on other human rights issues for years.) We see a grain of truth in his assessment of Beijing, however, and therefore offer his observations to round out the analytical picture for Washington consumers. End Comment.

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Bananas Break the Ice  
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¶3. (C) League of Social Democrats (LSD) legislator Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung declared victory following two days of (stuffed) banana-throwing and insult-hurling during Chief Executive Donald Tsang's annual Policy Address October 14 and follow-on question session with the Legislative Council (LegCo) October 15. The LSD were ejected from LegCo nine minutes into the Policy Address, but managed to last an hour into the ninety-minute question session. Never shy of drama, they brandished a range of props including a fake skeleton to excoriate the Chief Executive for his lack of substantive initiatives on constitutional reform and poverty alleviation. Leung argued that the LSD's antics will spur a two-pronged approach to negotiations with the Democratic Party (DPHK) and the Civic Party. The less important overtures will be from

the Tsang Administration, which Leung believes wants to demonstrate it has things under control, but cannot actually do a deal.

14. (C) The more important initiative comes from Beijing, probably through intermediaries. Leung tips LegCo President Jasper Tsang Yok-sing as a key player in this process. On one side, Leung has no doubt Tsang is both a Communist Party member and has considerable influence in Beijing. On the other, Tsang has considerable credibility among the pan-democrats. Should initial overtures prove fruitful, Leung expects Tsang would be asked to bring a delegation of pan-democrats (not including the LSD) to visit Guangzhou or even Beijing for more detailed discussions.

15. (C) Leung also told us he thought Beijing would be happiest with the Civics at the head of the pan-democratic movement. In addition to being moderate (at least compared to the LSD), the Civics' leadership are not involved with organizations that support democratic movements on the Mainland, as are key members of the DPHK.

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Responsible Opposing Viewpoints  
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16. (C) If Leung thinks he has done the other pan-democrats a favor, he will be waiting some time for thanks. DPHK's Fred Li Wah-ming deplored the LSD's shenanigans at the question session as a waste of time. Li thinks LSD chairman Raymond "Mad Dog" Wong Yuk-man's behavior at LegCo -- hurling aside one of the DPHK's protest placards and otherwise bad-mouthing

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them -- has widened the gap with the other pan-democrats. The Confederation of Trade Unions' Lee Cheuk-yan dismissed the LSD's performance as more evidence that they are "crazy."

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Sucker's Bet or Sucker Punch?  
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17. (C) We asked Leung whether, having made such efforts to bring Beijing and the other pan-dems together, there was any compromise the two sides might reach that the LSD would accept, and he said no. Therefore, should the DPHK and the Civics be concerned that the LSD would watch from the sidelines as they hammered out a deal, then condemn them for breaking faith on democracy? Without saying they wouldn't do such a thing, Leung admitted the LSD could find themselves on the wrong side of public opinion should the others strike a deal with Beijing the people of Hong Kong supported.

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Kam-gate, As Seen From the Grassy Knoll  
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18. (C) In Leung's eyes, embattled DPHK legislator Kam Nai-wai, who faces censure in LegCo over allegations of sexual harassment (ref B), is the proverbial chicken killed to scare the monkeys. While not suggesting they set up the scandal, Leung nevertheless thinks Beijing is fueling the fire. Beijing keeps files on everyone, Leung asserted, and they want to remind people they have the means to destroy reputations. In particular, Leung (strictly protect) asserted Kam's trouble was a message to the Civics' Ronny Tong Ka-wah, whom Leung believes has skeletons in his closet. Leung therefore took Tong's public critique of the Civics' by-election-as-referendum plan as his caving in to pressure from Beijing.

19. (C) More far-fetched sounding was Leung's assertion that pro-democracy (and rabidly anti-Beijing) Apple Daily's three days of front-page coverage of the Kam scandal was at the behest of Beijing. Leung claims Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, whose Next Media publishes AppleDaily, formed an alliance of

convenience with Beijing to enter the Taiwan media market years ago. Beijing had wanted a media mouthpiece in Taiwan, Leung explained, but could not acquire one directly. Therefore, Leung suggested the PRC in some way supported Lai's Next Media in its foray into the Taiwan market, and Next Media launched a years-long tirade against Chen Shui-bian in return. (Comment: No one here has heard any such rumor, and it suggests more to us that "LSD" is not merely an acronym for Leung. However, Apple Daily's seeming relish for battering Kam has raised eyebrows elsewhere in the pan-democratic camp. While no one disputes Apple Daily's predilection for using scandal to shift papers, three days on the front page was seen as excessive. End Comment.)

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Vote Early, Not Often  
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110. (C) Despite currently rocky relations among the pan-democrats, Leung continues to believe they can come together for the five-member by-election-as-referendum and that they can unite the Hong Kong people behind the single issue of universal suffrage. Unlike the Civics, however, the LSD wants to go to the ballot box now, so as to have a clear demonstration of strength before entering negotiations on constitutional reform. (Note: The Civics, by contrast, regard the referendum as an escalation to be employed should negotiations fail. End Note.) Leung admits that, if Kam is forced to resign, the referendum is probably dead -- "we can't go to the polls twice." The LSD, therefore, will back Kam staying in LegCo. Leung firmly believes there is no evidence to support a finding of wrong-doing against Kam, and seems equally firm in discounting that Kam might not need to be found guilty to be forced to step down.  
MARUT